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ABSTRACT

Addressing the need to consider ways in which the quality of educator work life can be improved, the author uses J. Walton's eight-point definition of the quality of work life as a framework for discussion. The eight points include (1) adequate and fair compensation, in which financial incentives are provided for advanced coursework; (2) safe and healthy working conditions, in which flexible time options are available; (3) opportunities to use and develop human capacity, so that teachers gain autonomy and perspective; (4) chances for continued growth and security, including career development and advanced opportunities; (5) social integration, which revolves around stratification and upward mobility; (6) teacher participation in school-based decision-making; (7) the balancing of work with life-space considerations and leisure needs; and (8) ensuring the social relevance of work life, so that society's demands and the tasks performed by schools do not diverge. In each area, the author points out methods for improving teachers' and other educators' work lives. (JEH)

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TOWARDS IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF WORK LIFE IN EDUCATION

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Introduction

Although social scientists have long debated the precise contribution of the protestant work ethic to the genesis of capitalism they generally agree that hard work, thrift and a capacity for deferring gratification historically were traits widely distributed in western societies. Moreover as part of the legitimacy of western economic systems, an individuals level of economic well being was seen to be a direct reflection of his commitment to this protestant work ethic.

However during the past decade, the ethic or what has passed for it appears to be under attack. Futurists such as Toffler (1970; 1981) suggest that industrial models of work are grossly inappropriate for the needs and aspirations of the future workforce. Industrialized nations are experiencing widespread changes in traditional attitudes towards the value and meaning of work, relationships between managers and employees, and the expectations which the employee brings to the workplace.

Social scientists such as Maslow (1965) would suggest that the root of this problem is to be found in the changing needs, aspirations and values of workers. It may be argued that industrialization and unionization has enabled workers to satisfy their basic needs for physiological requirements, safety and security. In a post-industrial society, however, once these lower level needs have been satisfied higher level needs would provide the motivation for work. Thus according to Maslow as higher level needs become salient workers would demand more meaningful jobs and as a result issues pertaining to the 'quality of worklife' will become magnified.

Research on the Quality of Work Life

Over the last decade considerable interest has been expressed in

issues relating to the quality of worklife. The first international conference on the Quality of Work Life was held in New York in 1972, and research centres such as the 'Centre for Quality of Working Life' UCLA have recently been established. Furthermore a number of large scale studies have recently been undertaken in Australia to investigate issues in this field.

Emery and Phillips (1976). In 1973 the Whitlam Labor Government commissioned the first large scale study on the 'quality of work life' in Australia. Emery and Phillips (1976) gathered data from 2,000 non-managerial employees including teachers, throughout Australia. This study examined many aspects of worklife including job satisfaction, pay, conditions of work, bureacratization of work and organizational climate. In the area of job satisfaction a significant finding of this study was that only 27 per cent of respondents indicated that they were very enthusiastic with their jobs; approximately half were moderately satisfied, and the remaining 17 per cent expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction with their work. A high positive correlation was also obtained between the perceived level of job satisfaction, interest in the job and sense of achievement. Thus although there may be some people who are satisfied with their job because it is undemanding and it allows them to take it easy, this was not so for this sample as a whole.

Sentry Holdings Ltd. (1978). A second major study reported by Sentry Holdings Ltd. (1978) also investigated many variables contributing to the quality of worklife including: business ethics; consumer issues; the role of the government and business; role of unions; arbitration and wage indexation; working hours; unemployment and job satisfaction. Teachers were again represented in this sample. Specifically in the area of job

satisfaction, this study supported the findings obtained by Emery and Phillips. This study found that 32 per cent of the total workforce were very enthusiastic with their work; 50 per cent were moderately satisfied; 13 per cent were dissatisfied; and 5 per cent were undecided. A perhaps more stringent measure of satisfaction was embodied in the question "if you could have the job you would like best, would it be the present one?" Fifty one per cent of respondents did allocate their preference to their present job. For most respondents their jobs offered interest, achievement and a sense of busyness most of the time.

Other countries such as U.S.A. have also undertaken comprehensive studies to investigate the quality of worklife.

Work in America (1975). A special task force was established to "examine health, education and welfare problems from the perspective of one of our fundamental social institutions - work" (Work in America, (1973: 81)). This study investigated factors such as problems of American workers; work and health; job redesign; work, education and job mobility; and federal work strategies. A major finding of this study which also sampled teacher opinions, was as follows:

> Many workers at all occupational levels feel locked-in, their mobility blocked, the opportunity to grow lacking in their jobs, challenge missing from their tasks. Young workers appear to be as committed to the institution of work as their elders have been, but many are rebelling against the anachronistic authoritarianism of the workplace.

If we evaluate these studies, at first sight such findings may suggest that there is little pressing need for Australian society to concern itself with improvements in the quality of worklife, whereas in U.S.A. the need for reforms may be more pressing. However, such a simplistic interpretation of the data may be very misleading. A number of additional factors need to be considered to accurately interpret this data:

(a) despite the apparent consistency of positive attitudes towards work, many respondents may simply be: (i) providing answers that they think are socially acceptable; (ii) feel satisfied because they have such low expectations of work life. (Emery and Phillips, op.cit., p. 13).

(b) In a highly interdependent economy even a minority of 10 - 20 per cent can be a grave concern if concentrated as a majority or near a majority in some one branch of industry e.g. telecommunications, education, transport etc. (Emery and Phillips, op.cit., p. 13).

(c) The current high levels of industrial unrest, and absenteeism may be associated with the finding that less then a third of the urban working population express "enthusiasm" about their work. (Emery and Phillips study, 27% enthusiastic; Sentry Holdings study 32% enthusiastic).

(d) The high and sustained levels of unemployment and underemployment in the Australian economy may restrict the focus of respondents towards valuing any job, irrespective of the quality of the work life associated with the position.

(e) The trend towards a post-industrial model of society which is reflected in a high degree of job obsolescence, retraining, and the need to consider multiple careers in one's working life.

(f) The trend towards academic inflation, which is demanding "larger and larger paper qualifications for smaller and smaller jobs".

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. It does however illustrate the complex issues involved in analysing data pertaining to the quality of work life. The quality of work life has emerged as an area of growing concern in western nations during the 1970;s and it is likely the issues relating to improvements in the quality of work life will continue to make significant impact on advanced societies during the remainder of this century.

Improving the Quality of Work Life in Education

The high levels of industrial unrest experience in Australian education systems over the last decade would suggest that there is a pressing need to clearly identify areas in education where improvements in the quality of work life can be implemented.

The remainder of this paper is directed towards identifying areas in education systems where significant quality of work life issues may arise. However, as can be seen from the studies previously cited the term 'quality of work life (Q.O.W.L.)' have served as a global concept for a diverse range of variables. A number of researchers have attempted to establish criteria to measure changes in this concept including Walton, 1975; Seashore, 1975; Sheppard, 1975; Lawler III, 1975; Dyer and Hoffenburg, 1975; and Goodale, Hall, Barke and Joyner, 1975 .

Walton (1975) presented a useful eight point definition of the Q.O.W.L. and this framework will asist the following discussion. Walton's criteria for measuring the concept of Q.O.W.L. include: (1) adequate and fair compensation; (2) safe and healthy working conditions; (3) immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities; (4) opportunity for continued growth and security; (5) social integration in the work organization; (6) constitutionalism in the work organization; (7) work and the total life space; and (8) the social relevance of work life. Each of these criteria will provide the quidelines for identifying areas for improving the Q.O.W.L. in education systems.

(1) Adequate and Fair Compensation

It is very difficult to judge the adequacy of income from work and the fairness of compensation, however Walton (1975: 93) suggests the following guidelines.

Adequate Income: Does the income from full time work meet socially determined standards of efficiency or the subjective standards of the recipient?

Fair Compensation: Does the pay received for certain work bear an appropriate relationship to the pay received for other work?

The prevailing economic conditions in the Australian economy have dictated that wage restraint is essential if cost push inflation is to be combatted. Teachers would appear to have acted responsibly in such a climate as the recent wage rise awarded to N.S.W. teachers was their first such increase since 1974. On the other hand the controversial salary award granted to principals in Victoria may well serve as a precedent for 'flow on' increases to establish parity in other states. Comparison of these increases with pay received for other work is difficult, particularly in light of the controversial 20 per cent salary increase granted for many Australian Federal cabinet ministers in July 1981.

However, one significant area for improvement would be to introduce appropriate financial remuneration for teachers who have gained additional specialist qualifications such as coursework Master's degrees in education. At present most post graduate students in education complete their studies on a part-time basis at their own expense. If improved teaching effectiveness is accepted as a desirable goal then incentive should be provided to encourage teachers to pursue post graduate study in a relevant field. Thus salary awards should be based upon: (a) years of teaching experience and (b) number of years of full-time equivalent tertiary education. This system has been used in many other parts of the world for many years. It is surprising to find that Australian teachers unions are still prepared to accept a basic 'front, loaded' model of training as an acceptable standard for a lifelong career in education.

(2) Safe and Healthy Working Conditions

It is generally accepted in our society that workers should not be exposed to physical conditions or organization of working hours that are detrimental to workers health. Although the allocation of working hours in education may not be injurious to the participants health, the organization of working hours in schools has many critics. (Toffler, 1970; 1981; Wood, 1977; 1980). If educational organizations are to effectively service client needs in the future then the cost benefits of schemes such as flextime,[a] compressed work weeks,[b] time banks,[a] total immersion learning,[c] flexiweek,[d] and summer schools[e] need to be carefully examined

(3) Immediate Opportunity to Use and Develop Human Capacities

Walton (1975: 94) noted that the industrial revolution and a simplistic extension of its underlying logic have taken much of the meaning out of work. Thus jobs differ in the degree to which they enable the worker to develop his knowledge and skills; enable participation in decision making; develop self esteem and provide challenge in the work itself. Two major criterion identified by Walton (1975: 94) in this area are as follows:

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a see Wood, J. 'Innovations in the Management of Time and Organizational Change' in People in Organizations Studies in Australia and New Zealand. Department of Business Administration, Victoria University of Wellington, N. Marsh et.al. (ed.), 1980. pp. 230-255.

b see Ingram, Bergen, McIntosh and Kunjebhari, 'The Jordan Plan - Review and Assessment of Alternatives'. Department of Educational Administration, University of Alberta.

c see Wood, J. 'Total Immersion Learning: An Alternative Model for Educational Instruction' in Educational Administrator, South Australian Institute for Educational Administration, No. 4, December 1980, pp. 5-9.

d see Porter and Rossini. 'Flexiweek' in Business Horizons, Vol. 21, No. 2.

e see Summer School Program, Lord Elgin High School, Burlington, Ontario, Canada.

Autonomy: Does the job allow for substantial autonomy and self control relative to external controls?

Information and Perspective: Can the worker obtain meaningful information about the total work process and the results of his own actions, in order to appreciate the relevance and consequences of his actions as a basis of self regulation?

With regard to the first criterion, significant changes in school and teacher based autonomy have occurred in recent years. The trend towards school based curriculum development has enabled teachers to use their capacities to enrich student learning experiences. However, curriculum development and evaluation are complex tasks. Without specialized training to develop teacher competencies in curriculum construction many teachers are frustrated by this challenge. Many 'end-on' teacher training programs do not provide adequate training in curriculum construction and thus the need for greater specialist inservice training, and post graduate training is essential if maximum utilization of teacher abilities is to be achieved.

Walton's second point concerning information about the total work process, also identifies a major problem in educational planning. Educational planning in Australian systems is not conducted on an integrated K - 12 basis. Thus the abilities of teachers to co-operatively plan across the total educational program is severely limited. A clear illustration of this fragmented planning arose in the recent 'back to the basics' debate, where tertiary institutions identified inadequate programs in secondary education as major contributing factors and as a reaction secondary institutions frequently focussed upon weaknesses in primary curriculum.

(4) Opportunity for Continued Growth and Security

In this category Walton (1975) shifts the focus from job to career opportunities. In this area Walton (1975: 95) focusses upon concerns such as:

Development: The extent to which one's current activities (work assignments and educational pursuits) contribute to maintaining and expanding one's capabilities rather than leading to obsolescence.

Prospective Application: The expectation to use expanded or newly acquired knowledge and skills in future work assignments.

Advancement Opportunities: The availability of opportunities to advance in organizational or career terms recognized by peers, family members or associates.

Continuing education is seen as a basic human right, however, under an industrial model of work most training is obtained in a 'front loaded approach'. Despite the rapid obsolescence of knowledge few incentives are provided for blue or white collar workers (including teachers) to pursue a lifelong commitment to education and professional and personal growth. Certainly the recent debate on the introduction of fees for students enrolled in post graduate programs may severely restrict the aspirations of teachers wishing to pursue additional studies. Under this new scheme teachers would have to personally bear the costs of post graduate studies in fields such as educational administration, curriculum development and counselling psychology. Also upon successful completion of these programs no financial incentive is offered in recognition of their professional upgrading. Most of these programs are not only completed at personal expense of the professional teacher, but usually on a part time basis in their own time. Some minor leave provisions are available for teachers and where serious shortages have occurred, such as counselling psychology, more generous study leave provisions have been made available. However no systematic provisions have been made to enable teachers to pursue continued professional training. A common defense is cost. However, a number of lower cost alternatives could be implemented. To use one example,

in Prince Edward Island in Canada, a self funded sabbatical leave scheme is available for teachers. The scheme called the '4 years over 5 plan' enables teachers to self fund a one year leave of absence with pay over a five year period. The teacher receives 4/5 of their salary for four years and in the fifth the accumulated 80 per cent of salary plus interest is available to the teacher for self funded leave. Upon return from leave, the teacher is posted to a teaching position similar to that which they held immediately prior to going on leave.[f] Many other lower cost schemes could also be investigated such as job rotation, whereby schools, regional offices of education and tertiary institutions rotated selected individuals across programs. Under such a scheme 'tertiary credits' would be awarded towards the completion of graduate programs, for the structured field experiences in educational administration.

A further restriction on the opportunities for continued growth and security relates to the promotional structure in schools. Most teachers have severely restricted career path options. Promotion to administrative posts is the most common form of advancement. However for many successful teachers administration is not an attractive career option. Furthermore, it can be argued that the competencies required for teacher effectiveness[g] may not be identical to those required for administrative effectiveness.[h] One major limitation of a bureaucratic model of school organization is that it

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f see Prince Edward Island. Canada 'Teacher Employment Regulations' Section (39), 1981. This section also contains discussion on allocation of fringe benefits and superannuation.

g see J. Duffie, 'Teacher Competence in Early Childhood Education'. Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, University of Alberta, for a detailed discussion of the validity of competency based teacher education.

h see Project Rome (Results Oriented Management in Education) at University of Georgia, Athens.

does not permit multiple career paths for teachers to pursue their specialized interests and talents across their teaching careers. A consistent weakness in many recent proposals[i] for the redesign of school promotion structures is their inability to propose a system whereby career paths in fields such as curriculum and counselling psychology can be integrated into the promotional blueprint for schools.

(5) Social Integration in the Work Situation

In this area Walton (1975) focusses upon the degree to which the worker obtains satisfying experiences and experiences self esteem in the workplace. He addresses questions such as:

> Egalitarianism: The absence of stratification in work organizations in terms of status symbols and/or steep hierarchical structures.
>
> Mobility: The existence of upward mobility as reflected, for example, by the percentage of employees at any level who could quality for higher levels.

The degree to which school organizations may be defined as bureaucracies has been widely researched[j], and the effects of bureaucracy upon teacher promotion and work satisfaction have been previously discussed. However, bureaucratic structures exert many influences on social integration in the work situation. The effects of bureaucratization upon student achievement are less obvious and not as clearly understood. Anderson (1974) investigating this relationship presents some very interesting findings. Anderson (1974: 63-74) comments on the research links between student alienation from school and school bureaucratization. He also noted that school bureaucratization

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i see Proposals put forward by NSW Teachers Federation on redesigning NSW school executive structures 1980.

see Proposals on restructuring school executive in NSW secondary schools. Document produced by NSW Department of Education 1979.

j see A discussion on research on bureaucracy in school by E. Ratsoy, 'Participative and Hierarchical Management of Schools: Some Emerging Generalizations' in Journal of Educational Administration, Vol.XI, No. 2, pp. 160-171.

is related to the ways in which principals behave. Thus, school principals have the potential power to reduce student alienation from school by modifying the organizational structure of their schools and classrooms. This de-bureaucratization of schools may be very important. Anderson found that less bureaucratic modes of school organization may produce higher level of pupil achievement, and at the same time (assuming Piaget's reasoning is correct) non-bureaucratic forms of organization might enhance the moral development of children.

These findings have widespread implications for administrators who are concerned with improvements in the Q.O.W.L. for all participants in school organizations. Anderson noted that students of low socio-economic status seem to attend more highly bureaucratized schools than do students of high economic status.

> This raises the interesting possibility that the poor achievement of these pupils in school may be partially due to the way that schools are run, and not just to deficiencies in their background as much current literature would suggest.
>
> (Anderson, (1974: 71))

(6) Constitutionalism in the Work Organization

The basic creed of industrial democracy is that people effected by decisions should participate in those decisions. The trend towards school based decision making has been accompanied by the development of new approaches for teacher participation in decision making (Bridges, 1967; Vroom and Yetton, 1973). However, the degree to which teachers can participate in school based decision is severely restricted by the bureaucratic design of school organization. If this trend towards teacher participation and human resource development continues, it would be expected that new forms of organic organization will emerge in future decades. One limitation of the recent Australian National Conference on School Based

Decision Making, (1977) was that school councils were the only structure examined for participative governance of schools. This limitation was noted in the Commission's report (1977: 28-29):

> Since many Conference participants saw school councils as one part of the continuum of consultitative decision making within a system they saw a need for more attention to be given to considering ways in which various groups could be selected to participate in making decisions beyond the level of the school, say at regional, state or national level.

(7) Work and the Total Life Space

A teachers work experiences may have postiive or negative effects on other spheres of his life such as family relationships and social interaction. Prolonged periods of overtime may have detrimental effects on family life. Similarly if promotion normally involves transfer, there are social and psychological costs when families are uprooted from networks of friends, acquaintances and local affiliations. The need for balance between work and leisure is emphasized by Walton (1975: 97):

> Balanced role of work: Work schedules, career demands, and travel requirements that do not take up leisure and family time on a regular basis. Likewise, advancement and promotion that do not require repeated geographical moves.

For many teachers work and living are synonymous. Many potential innovations in employment practices could be introduced into education to facilitate a better balance between work and leisure for teachers. Recent studies[k] in NSW show that there is strong support for the introduction of job sharing and permanent part time work in secondary schools. In South Australia

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k see Wood, J. Report on 'Teacher Attitudes Towards Permanent Part Time Teaching in NSW' ERDC Report, Canberra, July 1981. This report provides a detailed analysis of the cost-benefits associated with PPTW in education.

k see Report submitted to ERDC, Canberra on Job Sharing Study 'PPTT: An Australian Perspective', J. Wood, July, 1981.

schemes to introduce permanent part time work in the public service and educational organizations have already been implemented. Other proposals such as retirement phasing schemes, whereby permanent part time work patterns would be an option for teachers in the final 5 years of service could also be established. In addition permanent part time leave provisions could be expanded to enable teachers to take leave without pay, say on a 1 year for 5 years of service basis. These schemes would help alleviate problems of teacher stress and "burnout"[1] and at the same time create employment opportunities for unemployed teachers. The success of many schemes that are concerned with the reallocation of teacher working time need to be examined on a comprehensive basis. Wood (1979: 14-25) noted that some Canadian experiments concerned with innovations in time management in education systems had significant social costs. Many Department of Education employees in Alberta, found that when Flextime or Compressed Work Weeks had been introduced into government Departments of Education, they were not able to productively use their reallocated leisure time. Many of these employees became bored with this reorganized leisure time because their leisure time was now dispersed across a working week, whereas most organized leisure activities were only available on a "weekend" model. Thus recreational planners will have to ensure that leisure facilities and programs are provided in a manner that is congruent with new patterns of user demand in the future.

(8) The Social Relevance of Work Life

Walton (1975: 97) noted that the socially beneficial roles of the employing organization and the socially injurious effects of its activities

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1 see Feitler, F. and Tokar, B. 'Teacher Stress'. Unpublished paper presented at AARE. Los Angeles, April 1981.

have increasingly become salient issues for employees. Considerable criticism has been levied at the goals of the contemporary educational system and these critics consider that current educational goals are often irrelevant and ineffective in servicing the demands of this rapidly changing society. Toffler (1971: 399) stated:

> Our schools face backwards towards a dying system, rather than forward toward the emerging new society. Their vast energies are applied to cranking out Industrial Men - people tooled for survival in a system that will be dead before they are.

Further criticism can be found in The Report of the Committee on Educational Planning in Alberta (1972: 45) where it is stated:

> Schooling has been influenced by a kind of residual theory. According to this theory an educational system ought to do those things that other institutions like the home and the church are unable to do, or have relinguished . . . . Hence, schooling has not been a cause of society but a consequence of society . . . . In the future these tendencies are likely to be modified or changed . . . . Greater attention will be given to efforts intended to articulate change.

Common to many of these criticisms is the perceived divergence between the demands made by contemporary society on our schools and the tasks being performed by the schools to service the demands society makes upon them. It is suggested by such critics that if the school is to survive as a relevant organization in the future, then some of the educational goals must be changed to adapt to the new requests society makes on the school. However changes in goal emphasis may not necessarily be appropriate. Some critics suggest that the recent emphasis on school to work transition programs may not be an effective use of scarce educational resources. They argue that because of the high unemployment rate such expenditure are directed towards training students for non-existent jobs.

Other criticism of the relevance of traditional models of schooling are presented by futurists such as Toffler (1981). Toffler (1981: 194-204) notes that even the concept of large service organizations, such as schools

may be inappropriate for the needs of all clients in the future. Toffler suggests that the home, may become an 'electronic cottage'. Thus in the home, cheap computers will be available for multiple usage. Thus educational software may be provided for "individualized, interactive, computer education" in a wide variety of fields. There is already a rapidly growing educational software industry in United States, with a marketing strategy designed to implement 'home based' educational instruction. Thus school systems may have to make greater efforts to integrate instructional technology into their teaching strategies, otherwise such technology make challenge the role of the school in the instructional process.

Some Concluding Remarks

The foregoing discussion was designed to survey a number of pertinent issues relating to improvements in the quality of work life in education. Perhaps a quote from Toffler (1981: 9) best summarizes the importance of the need to examine quality of work life issues in education:

> A new civilization is emerging in our lives and blind men everywhere are trying to suppress it. .... Millions are already attuning their lives to the rythms of tomorrow. Others, terrified of the future, are engaged in a desperate, futile flight into the past and are trying to restore the dying world that gave them birth.

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